



Report to: Policy & Performance Improvement Committee: 1 September 2025  
Director Lead: Deborah Johnson, Director - Customer Services & Organisational Development  
Lead Officer: Jill Baker, Business Manager - Customer Services

Report Summary	
Report Title	Local Government & Social Care Ombudsman
Purpose of Report	To inform Members of the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman Annual Review Letter
Recommendations	That the Policy & Performance Improvement Committee note the contents of the report.

## 1.0 Background Information

- 1.1 Each year the Local Government & Social Care Ombudsman (LGSCO) produces an Annual Review Letter for local authorities detailing the number, type and decisions made relating to each authority. The annual review letter for the period 1 April 2024 – 31 March 2025 relating to this is attached to this report at **Appendix 1**.
- 1.2 The Housing Ombudsman is in the process of producing its Annual Complaints Review.

## 2.0 LGSCO Annual Review April 2024 – March 2025

- 2.1 The statistics provided with the Annual Review Letter, **Appendix 2**, show that for this period, the LGSCO received 16 complaints relating to services provided by this Council and made decisions on 16 complaints. This compares to 11 received and 9 decided for 2023 – 2024.

The LGSCO received a record number of complaints during 2024 - 2025, exceeding 20,00 for the first time – the result of 16% increase in each of the past two years

- 2.2 Although the figures for ‘received’ and ‘decided’ are the same, actual complaints differ between them: 2 received complaints do not feature in the decided list; and 2 decided complaints do not feature in the received list. This is due to several reasons:
- The complaint may have been received during 2024 - 2025 but a decision will be made in 2025 - 2026 (or even later) and therefore the complaint will show in a later year’s report; similarly, a complaint decided in 2024 – 2025 may have been received in the preceding year.

- The complaint did not relate to a service provided by us e.g. highways.
- The complaint was classed as premature.

2.3 Likewise the received figures the LGSCO provide never align with the figures the Council hold. This is because the LGSCO numbers include enquiries from people who the LGSCO signpost back to the Council. These are captured in the “closed after initial enquiries” figures. There is no way of identifying who these customers are. The table below details the categories of the complaints received and decisions made in each of the Ombudsman categories.

<b>Ombudsman Category</b>	<b>Received by the LGSCO</b>	<b>Decided by the LGSCO</b>
Benefits and Tax	0	0
Planning and Development	6	7
Housing	4	4
Corporate and Other Services	5	4
Environmental, Public Protection and Regulation	1	1
<b>Total</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>16</b>

2.4 The table below shows the outcome of each decision.

<b>Ombudsman Category</b>	<b>Closed after initial enquiries</b>	<b>Advice given</b>	<b>Incomplete or invalid</b>	<b>Referred back for local resolution</b>	<b>Upheld</b>	<b>Total</b>
Benefits & Tax						
Planning & Development	5			2		7
Housing	1	2	1			4
Corporate and Other Services	2			2		4
Environmental, Public Protection and Regulation					1	1
<b>Total</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>16</b>

2.5 The upheld complaint was regarding noise nuisance. The Council was found at fault due to a delay in beginning a formal statutory nuisance investigation and providing conflicting information. The remedy was to apologise and to make a symbolic payment to remedy the injustice caused by the faults.

Adjusted for our population, this represents 0.8 upheld decisions per 100,000 residents. The average for similar councils is of 1.1 upheld decisions per 100,00 which means we are performing better than average.

- 2.6 During 2024 - 2025, the LGSCO upheld 83% of all the investigations they carried out, up from 80% in 2023 - 2024.

Complaints relating to Education & Children's Services dominate their casework, accounting for 27% of all complaints and enquiries received and 91% of these were upheld.

Significant for Councils, is the number of complaints the LGSCO received relating to Housing accounted for 17% of all cases they received, a higher proportion to previous years. 85% of these were upheld.

- 2.7 The LGSCO recognise that while issues relating to housing, remain particularly prevalent in London, similar issues are repeated across the county. Issues include people being denied access to housing resisters, being given the wrong priority and not being treated fairly when homeless or faced with homeless.
- 2.8 Although the LGSCO dealt with four housing relating complaints relating to us, none were taken any further.
- 2.9 The LGSCO has published anonymised details of the eight complaints relating to our Council which it reviewed and closed after making initial enquiries.

<b>Ombudsman reference number and link</b>	<b>Ombudsman category</b>	<b>Summary of complaint</b>	<b>Decision Reason</b>
<a href="https://www.lgo.org.uk/decisions/planning/planning-applications/24-014-287">https://www.lgo.org.uk/decisions/planning/planning-applications/24-014-287</a>	Planning	The Council's planning committee did not consider the proposal objectively and pre-determined the outcome of the application.	We will not investigate this complaint because we are unlikely to find fault.
<a href="https://www.lgo.org.uk/decisions/housing/private-housing/24-013-538">https://www.lgo.org.uk/decisions/housing/private-housing/24-013-538</a>	Housing	The Council failed to accept liability for damage caused by its contractor; the Council's insurer denied the claim; claimant wants Council to claim from contractor or make payment directly itself.	We will not investigate because it is reasonable for the complainant to challenge the decision on liability in the County Court.

<a href="https://www.lgo.org.uk/decisions/planning/planning-applications/24-012-493">https://www.lgo.org.uk/decisions/planning/planning-applications/24-012-493</a>	Planning	The Council granted retrospective permission for a school car park extension without obtaining a drainage strategy and addressing other related issues; complainant wants the Council to ensure it will follow correct procedures in the future and ensure the school maintains its drains.	We will not investigate because the complaint does not meet the tests in our Assessment Code; there is not enough evidence of fault and we cannot achieve the outcome the complainant is seeking.
<a href="https://www.lgo.org.uk/decisions/other-categories/councillor-conduct-and-standards/23-021-481">https://www.lgo.org.uk/decisions/other-categories/councillor-conduct-and-standards/23-021-481</a>	Councillor conduct and standards	A Parish Councillor behaved unprofessionally, the Council investigation was delayed and did not fully address the complainant's concerns; they wanted the Council to re investigate and retract part of the investigation findings.	We cannot investigate the actions of a Parish Councillor nor will we investigate how the Council considered the complaint; there is no worthwhile outcome we can achieve.
<a href="https://www.lgo.org.uk/decisions/planning/enforcement/24-008-948">https://www.lgo.org.uk/decisions/planning/enforcement/24-008-948</a>	Planning	Conduct of a Council officer involved in enforcement action against the complainants and a request to remove officer from the case.	We will not investigate because the complaint falls outside our jurisdiction due to the passage of time, we cannot look at matters already considered by the courts and there is a potential remedy through the courts.

<a href="https://www.lgo.org.uk/decisions/planning/planning-applications/24-007-205">https://www.lgo.org.uk/decisions/planning/planning-applications/24-007-205</a>	Planning	The Council granted permission for a neighbour's development which overlooks his property/impacts his privacy; he did not receive consultation letters so was unable to comment on the application.	We will not investigate because there is not enough evidence of fault affecting the outcome.
<a href="https://www.lgo.org.uk/decisions/other-categories/leisure-and-culture/24-007-875">https://www.lgo.org.uk/decisions/other-categories/leisure-and-culture/24-007-875</a>	Leisure and culture	Inadequate toilet provision and signage at a Council run building; also how staff dealt with her when she reported her concerns and made a complaint.	We will not investigate because further investigation would not lead to a different outcome.
<a href="https://www.lgo.org.uk/decisions/planning/planning-applications/24-007-898">https://www.lgo.org.uk/decisions/planning/planning-applications/24-007-898</a>	Planning	The Council told him to apply for planning permission but then declined to determine his application and failed to respond to his agent's correspondence.	We will not investigate because there is not enough evidence of fault by the Council to warrant investigation.

### 3.0 Further Learning and Developments

- 3.1 All Ombudsman complaints received by the Council are reviewed to see if any changes in processes and policies are required.
- 3.2 Regarding the case where the Council was found to be at fault, a revised process has been implemented, resulting in all noise complaints starting as a statutory nuisance investigation, together with the Licensing Enforcement Officer assisting in any informal resolution running alongside the noise investigation.
- 3.3 The LGSCO have issued their Complaint Handling Code as "advice and guidance" and intend to start considering the Code as part of their process from April 2026. Councils are encouraged to adopt the Code as soon as they can do so.
- 3.4 The LGSCO Complaint Handling Code mirrors the Housing Ombudsman Complaint Handling Code, which the Council complies with.
- 3.5 The LGSCO has published a series of good practice guides and free training resources. These will be utilised training provided to our employees.

- 3.6 The Council welcomes complaints and to support this, is creating a series of training videos to support its employees.
- 3.6 We do have a strong emphasis on complaint handling and are constantly reviewing the handling of complaints and our practices

#### **4.0 Implications**

In writing this report and in putting forward recommendation's officers have considered the following implications: Data Protection, Digital and Cyber Security, Equality and Diversity, Financial, Human Resources, Human Rights, Legal, Safeguarding and Sustainability and where appropriate they have made reference to these implications and added suitable expert comment where appropriate.

##### **Financial Implications FIN25-26/8294**

- 4.1 There are no financial implications arising from this report. However, it is worth noting that if any maladministration is found by the Ombudsman, a financial remedy or compensation can be imposed, for which there would be no specific budget.

#### **Background Papers and Published Documents**

Except for previously published documents, which will be available elsewhere, the documents listed here will be available for inspection in accordance with Section 100D of the Local Government Act 1972.

None